

REPORT NO

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1. During the period from [ ] 1953, Soviet Army units in East Germany held large scale exercises involving units of the Twenty-Fourth Air Army. Conclusions with regard to number and type of air force units participating in the maneuvers can be drawn from reports by various sources on alert practices, decreased or increased occupation strengths at the individual airfields during the period of the maneuvers, rail shipments and convoys of motor vehicles carrying air force soldiers and equipment observed. Only few reports have been received from the maneuver area from which the type of missions assigned to individual air units can be inferred. Except for the regiments of the fighter divisions in Puetritz and Zerbst, all other fighter units and ground attack units were observed participating in the exercises. However, there is a possibility that also the regiments of the divisions in Puetnitz and Zerbst were involved in the maneuvers without being observed.

2. The following joint exercises were held by army and air force units:

a. From [ ] an exercise by the reinforced 9th Gds Tank Div in the area south of Neustrelitz probably involving the fighter regiments from Neuruppin, Finow, and Wittstock and the ground attack regiment from Brandenburg-Briest.

b. From [ ] an exercise by the Third Shock Army in the area south of Stendal, probably involving the fighter regiments from Marseburg, Altenburg, Pinow, Neuruppin, Wittstock, and Laerz, and the ground attack regiments from Stendal and Brandenburg-Briest.

c. From [ ] an exercise by the 9th Tank Div in the Zeithain-Grossenhain area, probably involving the fighter regiments from Grossenhain and Prand, and the ground attack regiments from Alt Loennewitz and Finsterwalde.

d. From [ ] an exercise by the Eighth Gds Army in Thuringia, south of the Weimar - Erfurt - Gotha line, probably involving the fighter division in Merseburg with the fighter regiments from Koethen, Merseburg, and Altenburg; the fighter division in Grossenhain with

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the fighter regiments from Grossenhain and Brand; the ground attack division in Brandenburg with the ground attack regiments from Brandenburg-Briest and Brandenburg-Arado; the ground attack division in Alt Loennewitz with the ground attack regiments from Brandis, Alt Loennewitz, and Finsterwalde; and aircraft of the independent fighter regiment from Welzow and of the reconnaissance regiment from Stendal.

3. Most of the observations were made during the maneuver in Thuringia but it is believed that the exercises held in other areas were probably conducted in the same manner. It is assumed that the maneuver mentioned in paragraph 2 d was conducted after the following pattern:

- a. The air force units were probably directed by the headquarters of the Southern Ftr Corps in Wittenberg and the ground attack corps in Finsterwalde. The participation of the fighter corps is indicated by the departure on [ ] from the Brueckenkopf Kaserne in Wittenberg of two columns of about 60 motor vehicles carrying about 120 soldiers and equipment and the re-occupation of the installation by the supply unit and signal unit of the Southern Ftr Corps.

- b. The following transfers were probably effected:

[ ] One fighter regiment from Grossenhain and elements of the fighter regiment from Brand to Erfurt/Bindersleben;

[ ] The second fighter regiment from Grossenhain to Koethen; between [ ] The ground attack regiments from Brandenburg-Briest and Brandenburg-Arado to Erfurt-Bindersleben;

[ ] The independent fighter regiment from Welzow to Altenburg, the ground attack regiment from Finsterwalde to Altenburg, the ground attack regiment from Alt Loennewitz to Schkeuditz near Leipzig, and elements of the latter regiment to Merseburg.

- c. The air force units were divided into an eastern and a western force [ ] The eastern force included the fighter division from Merseburg with its regiments from Koethen, Merseburg, and Altenburg, reinforced by a fighter regiment from Grossenhain and probably the independent fighter regiment from Welzow; the ground attack division in Alt Loennewitz with its regiments from Brandis, Alt Loennewitz, and Finsterwalde. The western force included the fighter division from Grossenhain with one regiment from Grossenhain and elements of the regiment from Brand; the ground attack division from Brandenburg with the regiments from Brandenburg-Briest and Brandenburg-Arado.

- d. Only few indications are available as to the movements of the army units involved. It is believed that some of the army units assembled east of the Ilm River near Bad Berka between [ ] During this period, MiG-15s were observed flying in formations of four over the assembly area without attacking ground targets. Possibly, the fighter aircraft were assigned the mission to protect the air space over the assembly area against enemy aircraft.

When the ground troops went into action on [ ] the ground attack aircraft started their attacks at patches of woodland and roads. The ground attack aircraft were observed over the battle area for up to one hour, while the fighters were observed in this area only for up to 35 minutes. The ground attack planes flying in formation frequently approached from a low altitude, suddenly climbed and changed their formation to

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one line abreast. Subsequently, the aircraft dived at their targets from altitudes of 200 to 300 meters at an angle of 20 to 40 degrees. They pulled out of dive at an altitude of 20 to 25 meters. While climbing, the aircraft banked again, assembled in formation and then made another attack. MiG-15s were never observed attacking ground targets but they were probably employed only for the protection of the assembly area. From these observations it appears that, on [redacted] the air force units were mainly employed for attacking or supporting army units crossing the Ilm River. Attacks were probably made at targets the pin-point location of which had been determined by air and ground observation and which could be repeatedly approached in low-level flights. The observations on the employment of MiG-15s are in agreement with previous information that missions flown by MiG-15s at low altitudes are generally of short duration.

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After crossing the Ilm River, the army units moved westward into the Erfurt-Arnstadt area probably on [redacted]. There the exercise was completed around noon on [redacted]. On days mentioned, ground attack aircraft and fighters attacked artillery emplacements, tanks, infantry units, and motor vehicle columns. It was not observed that bombs were released by MiG-15s nor were steep diving attacks made. Apparently, fighter units were only employed for the protection of own aircraft and attacks on enemy ground attack planes and fighters.

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It could not be determined whether the splitting up of air force units into an eastern and a western force was maintained throughout the entire maneuver. It is possible that the ground attack units were employed on both sides, depending on the situation. Probably due to the lack of airfields in Thuringia, which is close to the zonal border, the air force units could not easily be formed into opposing forces.

e. Because of continuous fog in the Erfurt area between 16 and 20 October, the two ground attack regiments from Brandenburg returned to their home fields only on [redacted] while the ground units had returned by rail already on [redacted]. After [redacted] the usual activity was again observed at the other airfields which had been vacated during the maneuvers.

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4. Summarizing, it can be stated that the number of exercises in 1953 was smaller than during the fall of 1952. The exercise held by the Eighth Gds Army in Thuringia this fall, can be compared with the large scale maneuver by the Eighth Gds Army in the Dessau-Aken area between [redacted] 1952. The 1953 exercise again involved a sizeable number of fighter and ground attack units. The observations made in the maneuver area indicate that the aircraft supported the army units in the same way as in 1952. The ground attack aircraft were mainly employed over the battle field and were probably directed by officers who were posted in the front lines of ground troops. No information has been received on the employment of ground attack aircraft against targets in the rear of the operational area. This mission will probably be carried out by light bomber units which, at present, are not part of the Twenty-Fourth Air Army. Il-10s are apparently no longer employed in the rear area of the enemy because of their inferiority to modern fighter aircraft. No new information could be obtained on the employment of MiG-15s as fighter bombers. As in 1952, alert practices were held at the individual airfields in connection with the maneuvers. However, no details could be obtained because of strict security measures at the fields.

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